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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [MOPS](#) [BL](#)  
SUBJECT: MOD MEETING READOUT, COUNTERTERRORISM CONFERENCE

Classified By: Economic Political Counselor  
Andrew Erickson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

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SUMMARY  
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11. (C) The National Defense University (NDU), via its Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies (CHDS), co-sponsored a January 23-25 security and defense workshop which focused on counter-terrorism (CT) in La Paz with the Ministry of Defense. Participants identified the top four threats to Bolivian national security as narcotrafficking, crime, social conflict, and terrorism and developed strategies for addressing those threats. Following the conference, Milgroup Commander Colonel James Campbell met with Defense Minister Walker San Miguel, who thanked the milgroup for its assistance and said his ministry will provide President Morales with a summary of the conference's conclusions. On renewing diplomatic notes to cover U.S. military activities in Bolivia, San Miguel promised to move forward the week of January 29 with the Foreign Ministry. On the F-10 CT unit, San Miguel complained it lacks discipline, and that the GOB was beginning to think about its reorganization. San Miguel showed interest in U.S. training and exchange opportunities, including a MOD visit to the United States in April, and expressed gratitude for disaster assistance for recent flooding. The CT conference, along with upcoming training and exchange opportunities, seemed to further mil-to-mil relations. With the F-10 equipment in joint custody and the MANPADs issue on the back burner (at least for now), military relations may provide some increased space for cooperation with the GOB. However, the GOB will have to take concrete steps in coming months to develop a solid CT policy and the appropriate legislation. This will be a challenge given other political distractions. End Summary.

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CT CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS  
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12. (SBU) The National Defense University (NDU), via its Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies (CHDS), co-sponsored a January 23-25 security and defense workshop which focused on counter-terrorism in La Paz with the Ministry of Defense.

Thirty-three high-level Bolivian military and police officials attended, in spite of rumors that they had been discouraged from doing so. DefMin Walker San Miguel closed the conference.

13. (SBU) Participants identified the top four threats to Bolivian national security. Then, via working groups, they designed a strategy to address each threat. On the last day of the workshop, participants developed a timeline to implement the CT strategy. The four threats and the related strategies are as follows:

--Narcotrafficking- Participants set as their goal a 50 percent reduction in illicit drug trafficking in four years. They planned to meet that goal by strengthening GOB institutions, controlling coca production and the trafficking of precursor chemicals, increasing drug interdiction, promoting drug prevention campaigns, and creating a national center for inter-institutional coordination under CONALTUD.

--Crime- With regard to the threat of general criminal activity, conference attendees decided to attempt to reduce crime rates by 30 percent over four years by strengthening institutions (like the FELCC), reforming the criminal code, establishing improved intelligence coordination, and educating Bolivians about crime prevention.

--Social conflict- Bolivian military officials identified social conflict as a near-constant threat and declared their intent to prevent its escalation. They noted the importance of identifying conflicts before, during, and after they occur, as well as analyzing the legitimacy of social demands and searching for solutions. They said GOB officials should encourage a culture of negotiation and ensure an adequate response by the judicial power and security forces to social conflict.

--Counter-terrorism- The conference's CT goal was to prevent and control terrorism in coordination with neighboring countries. In order to do so, participants recommended that security and defense institutions, including intelligence capacity be strengthened. They further suggested the creation of a national committee to fight terrorism, enforcement of international conventions, and improved migration control. COSDNA will draft the new CT strategy, and is scheduled to present a bill to Congress by August 2007.

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MILGROUP COMMANDER'S FOLLOW-UP MEETING WITH MOD  
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14. (C) Following the conference, Milgroup Commander Colonel James Campbell met January 26 with DefMin Walker San Miguel, who thanked the milgroup for its assistance and said his ministry will provide President Morales with a summary of the conference's conclusions. San Miguel commented that the CHDS speakers were experts in their field and "well-balanced" in facilitating discussion. Regarding the new CT strategy, he noted that the GOB might require additional U.S. assistance, particularly regarding cyberterrorism, information exchanges with neighboring countries, and improved capacity to monitor overflights. The minister said "we don't know what's happening in our airspace" and that he did not want Bolivia to become a paradise for criminal overflights and illegal landings on Bolivia's small, remote runways.

15. (C) On renewing diplomatic notes to cover U.S. military activities in Bolivia (instead of a permanent Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA)), San Miguel promised to move forward with the Foreign Ministry. He suggested that the New Horizons exercise focus more on Riberalta to counter rumors of Venezuelan influence there. He also asked how much money will be spent on the exercise and for the total amount of time of U.S. forces on the ground. Colonel Campbell responded that the milgroup would avoid using troops to the extent possible and rely instead on contractors with Bolivian military support for the operation. San Miguel agreed that would be best, given the current sensitivities about foreign

troops in Bolivia. San Miguel said he wants to conduct the exercise with complete transparency. He said he will meet with Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Mauricio Dorfler and then begin the process for obtaining congressional approval.

¶6. (C) On the F-10 CT unit, San Miguel complained it lacks discipline, and that the GOB was beginning to think about its reorganization with a more institutional and professional mandate. Because two military officials contradicted each other about the unit's continued existence, Col. Campbell asked the minister for clarification and cautioned against any one military branch gaining control over the unit to the exclusion of the others. San Miguel agreed and explained that while the F-10 unit continues to exist, it no longer has CT responsibilities. The DefMin said that by March, the GOB will decide whether it will re-establish a national CT unit. San Miguel said the GOB may approach the Embassy for basic equipment, and said whatever the outcome, "we'll work on this together."

¶7. (C) San Miguel expressed interest in U.S. training and exchange opportunities. He said he will personally attend a July conference in Lima and that he looks forward to visiting the United States in April to meet Secretary of Defense Gates. Col. Campbell also raised the possibility of a new military warehouse to be constructed with milgroup funding, to which San Miguel responded positively. The DefMin also expressed gratitude for disaster assistance for recent flooding.

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COMMENT: BUILDING BRIDGES  
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¶8. (C) Participants' feedback was positive. While there was some initial skepticism (including the brief mention of transnational companies and the United States as possible threats), it had dissipated by day three. The conference, along with upcoming training and exchange opportunities, served to further the increasingly positive mil-to-mil relations. With the F-10 equipment in joint custody and the MANPADs issue on the back burner (at least for now), military relations may provide some increased space for cooperation with the GOB. However, the GOB will have to take concrete steps in coming months to develop a solid CT policy and appropriate legislation. This will be a challenge given other political distractions. End comment.

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